

Commissioned to Train Aviators



Biplanes were used for early training and local patrols



A review of the troops at Air Station Santa Barbara



A mechanic repairs a Corsair



Corsair crews stand by for inspection



Pilots review their flight plans



Dauntless crew flies over the Pacific near Santa Barbara



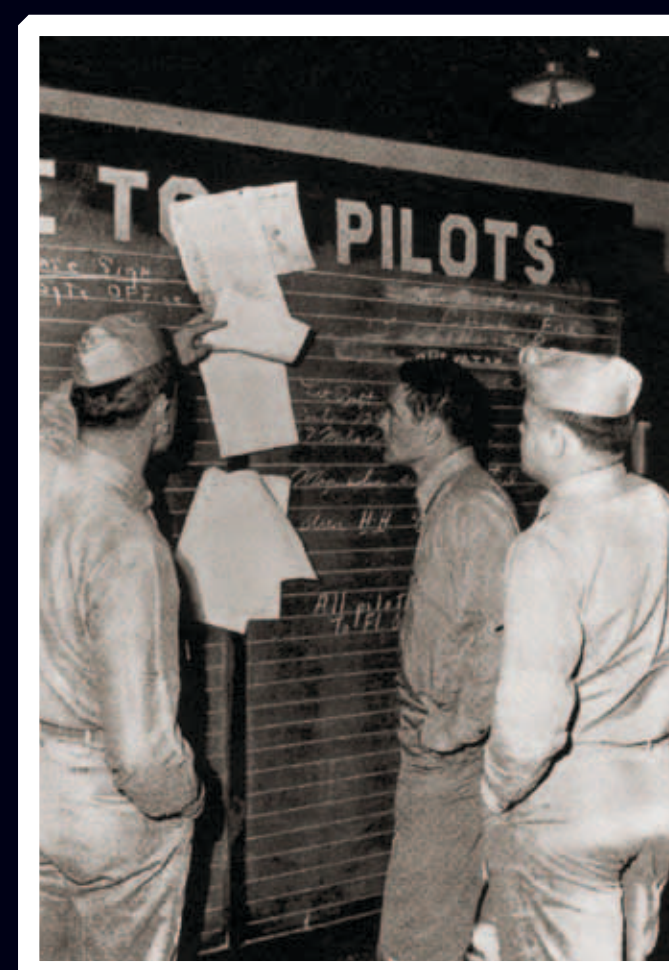
A pilot in the cockpit of the Avenger



A pilot & his Avenger prepare at Air Station Santa Barbara in 1943



"They (Women Marines) don't have a nickname, and they don't need one. They get their basic training in a Marine atmosphere, at a Marine Post. They inherit the traditions of the Marines. They are Marines."
--- Lieutenant General Thomas Holcomb 1943



Pilot briefing in the barracks



Wings fold on aircraft carrier-based planes

Marines from across the country were assigned to Marine Corps Air Station Santa Barbara. They arrived with at least basic flying skills and were brought together here for advanced flight training, to form or reform squadrons, and to detach and deploy for combat.

While at MCAS Santa Barbara, Marine aviators studied and practiced critical aviation, combat and survival skills.

Pilots at the station developed skills through:

- Fighter, torpedo and bomber training
- Gunnery instruction
- Ship and aircraft recognition training
- Combat training
- Navigation training
- Fuel conservation techniques
- Swimming/Survival skills
- Night flying

The station was initially equipped with only a few aircraft, and at least half were bi-planes. While the Air Station was being constructed, these aircraft were used for local patrols. Some were fitted with depth charges to repel a possible submarine attack after near-by Ellwood oil fields were shelled.

As the base grew and became established, more sophisticated aircraft like the SNJ "Pilot Maker" combat trainer, the F4U "Corsair" fighter, and bombers like the TBM/TBF "Avenger" and SBD "Dauntless" were used for training.

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Historically all Marine flyers were deployed to ground bases, but later, because of the increasing threat of enemy attacks and the vast distance between island battles and island air bases, Marine aviators were deployed to aircraft carriers in the Pacific.

Like naval aviators, carrier-based Marine squadrons were initially trained to defend the fleet and provide general air support, but later these Marines were again trained to provide close air support for troops on the ground.

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Over 400 enlisted women and officers from Aviation Women's Reserve Squadron #2 staffed Marine Corps Air Station Santa Barbara. The squadron trained flight crews and serviced aircraft, jobs that had been performed mostly by men prior to WWII.

Squadron patches



VMTB 143



VMSB 132



VMF 512



VMF 222



VMF 115



VMF 213



VMF 215



VMF 123



VMF 214